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JRNL 201.01: Diversity in Media

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Diversity in Media

*The University of Montana School of Journalism
Fall 2014 — JRNL 201 — 3 credits
Mondays & Wednesdays, 3:40-5 p.m., DAH 301*

Instructor: Assistant Professor Jason Begay
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Office hours: 2-4 p.m. Monday-Thursday, or by appointment
I am almost always in my office

Scope of Course: We will examine the changing U.S. population, how the U.S. news media portray different ethnic groups and other diverse populations, and the importance of having a diverse workforce and diverse coverage. By studying examples of news coverage, students will develop an understanding of best professional practices in news media regarding diversity, and how to become better consumers of news and information.

"I've said in the past that diversity is not simply about addressing legal and historical imbalances, or assuaging liberal guilt, or juggling numbers. It is not mainly about being morally right or politically correct. The point is not, as Bill Clinton once said of his cabinet, that we want a newsroom that looks like America. The point is, we want a newsroom that knows America, in all of its variety, from firsthand experience. In other words, The Times needs a staff diverse enough to speak not only to the Washington foreign policy establishment and the political leadership in Albany, but fluent in the cultures of all of America's communities, Latino and Asian, black and white, rural and urban, military and civilian, devout believer and skeptic, so that we can reproduce those voices with as much fidelity as possible. That imperative — that journalistic imperative — has only grown as the country itself has become more diverse.

"We have to do better."

— New York Times Executive Editor Bill Keller

Course Outcomes: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of diversity, particularly as it relates to race and ethnicity, and gender.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of assuring the presence of diverse voices and perspectives in the news, and how that relates to truth, accuracy and fairness.
- Be able to critically evaluate how the news media portray diverse populations.
- Improve your own reporting and/or media literacy skills.

Required textbook:

- “The Authentic Voice: The Best Reporting on Race and Ethnicity,” edited by Arlene Noto Morgan, Alice Irene Pifer and Keith Woods. This book includes a DVD.
- New America Media website, www.newamericamedia.org.

Other required readings will be assigned in class, or via email. Many will be posted on the course Moodle site.

Use of Moodle: Among items posted will be the syllabus, updates to the course schedule and links to articles that will be assigned as required reading.

Course Outline: Classes will consist of lectures, discussions, and exercises. We will have guest speakers, which will change our course schedule, depending on their availability. We’ll also keep our options open so we can react to breaking stories and issues.

Since this is a journalism class, You are expected to keep up with the news so we can discuss coverage issues. The United States has a president who is African American; he has appointed two women to the U.S. Supreme Court, including the first Latina to serve on the court. While President Obama didn’t campaign on the issue of race, it has been a theme throughout his presidency. Rather than avoid talking about race and ethnicity, and other diversity topics (women, LGBTQ, people with disabilities) we welcome it in this class.

Attendance: You are expected to attend each class meeting. The success of this course depends on the quality of our discussions, including discussions with guest speakers. Each unexcused absence will lower your grade by 5 points (see below for grading basis). An excused absence means you have contacted me **before class** and have an approved, valid reason, such as illness or family emergency. I will take roll in this class.

Grading: Attendance and in-class participation are part of your grade. There will be **two mid-term quizzes**, to assure that you keep up with the reading assignments, pay attention to lectures and presentations by our guest speakers. There *will* be a **final** exam. In addition, you will have assignments that get you out of the classroom attending events and interviewing other people, and that call for personal reflection. Your final grade will be based on total points earned. (For example: 90-100% of total points = A.)

Basis for Grading: Maximum possible points: 200

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| • Quizzes on Oct. 1 and Nov. 3 (25 points each) | 50 points |
| • Final exam on Monday, Dec. 10, 1:10-3:10 p.m. | 50 points |
| • First written assignment (due Sept. 15) | 30 points |
| • Final written assignment (due Dec. 1) | 20 points |
| • Second written assignment (due Oct. 15) | 15 points |
| • UM DiverseU assignment (Nov. 5) | 15 points |
| • Attendance/class participation | 20 points |

Ethics/academic integrity. The University of Montana School of Journalism is committed to the highest standards of academic and professional ethics and expects its students to adhere to those standards.

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to a penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the university. You need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, online at:

<http://life.umt.edu/SA/documents/fromWeb/StudentConductCode1.pdf>

Class Conduct. Student participation is essential for this class to be truly effective. This class is highly interactive so we can learn from each other. I expect student participation and urge students to speak up constantly without fear of being right or wrong. I will assign participation grades based on the courage it takes to participate in discussion.

Students are also expected to set cell phones to the silent – NOT vibrate – setting while in class. You may keep your phones readily available to read incoming messages in case of emergencies, but please do not use class time to compose text messages of any type during class. Computers and tablets are welcome only for the purpose of note taking. If I see anyone using a device for any other purpose, that student will lose the privilege of using the device for the remainder of the semester.

Disability Services for Students. If you are a student with a disability and wish to discuss reasonable accommodations for this course, contact the instructors privately to discuss the specific modifications you wish to request. Please be advised we may request that you provide a letter from Disability Services for Students verifying your right to reasonable modifications. If you have not yet contacted Disability Services, in Lommasson Center 154, please do so to verify your disability and to coordinate your reasonable modifications. For more information, visit the Disability Services Web site at www.umt.edu/dss/

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"The University of Montana respects, welcomes, encourages, and celebrates the differences among us. In recognition of this commitment, we value all members of the campus community, not in spite of, but because of their differences. The resultant value ambience influences the way our students perceive the world. These experiences enrich us with a greater understanding of the human condition and the challenges all people must confront in a rapidly changing, increasingly globalized, and ever more interdependent world society."

- UM President Royce Engstrom